

Science Advisory Council

Meeting Summary – First Meeting
September 15, 2008
100 Cambridge St, Boston

In attendance:

Science Advisory Council

Todd Callaghan, MA CZM
David Terkla, Department of Economics, UMass Boston
John F. Looney Jr., Environmental, Earth and Ocean Sciences, UMass Boston
Frank Muller-Karger, School of Marine Science and Technology, UMass
Dartmouth (teleconferencing)
Kathryn Ford, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
Priscilla Brooks, Conservation Law Foundation
Carlton Hunt, Battelle
Anamarija Frankic, Environmental, Earth and Ocean Sciences, UMass Boston
(alternate)
John Duff, Earth and Ocean Sciences, UMass Boston (alternate)
Wendell Brown, School of Marine Science and Technology, UMass Dartmouth
(alternate)
Not able to attend: Scott Krauss, New England Aquarium
Bill Schwab, US Geological Survey, Wood's Hole

Others in attendance

Deerin Babb-Brott, EOEEA
John Weber, EOEEA/MA CZM
Prassede Vella, EOEEA/MA CZM
Bruce Carlisle, MA CZM
Jessica Dyson, The Nature Conservancy
Kate Killerlain-Morrison, The Nature Conservancy
Zachary Crowley, Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources, and
Agriculture
Lisa Conley, Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources, and
Agriculture
Micaelah Morrill, legislative aide to Senator Robert O'Leary
Matthew Boger, Massachusetts Ocean Coalition
Nicholas Napoli, Massachusetts Ocean Partnership
Howard Krum, Massachusetts Ocean Partnership

Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Coastal Management Deerin Babb-Brott opened the meeting at 1:15 PM by thanking Council members for their participation in this endeavor. He introduced John Weber, Ocean Resources Manager, who will serve as the coordinator for the Scientific Advisory Council ("Council"), and Todd Callaghan (MA CZM) and

Kathryn Ford (MA DMF) as co-leads of the SAC Todd and Kathryn will have lead responsibility for developing draft Council products such as the baseline assessment, working in conjunction with the Council to synthesize pertinent information, for incorporation into the planning process.

Assistant Secretary Deerin Babb-Brott then invited all participants at the meeting to introduce themselves and comment on his/her professional background and interests in the ocean management effort. He also asked Council members to send their biography to John Weber if they have not already done so.

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (“EEA”) Secretary Ian Bowles made a brief appearance during which he expressed his appreciation to the participants and stressed the importance of the role of the SAC in giving invaluable advice to policy makers during this ocean management effort. He concluded by asking the SAC and the EEA planning team to work together for the success of this endeavor.

Assistant Secretary Babb-Brott concluded by noting that the Open Meeting Law applies to the Council—meaning that substantive discussions among the Council regarding its work was to take place during formal meetings of the Council. Additionally, Assistant Secretary Babb-Brott noted that EEA was writing a letter to the Ethics Commission to obtain a ruling on potential conflict of interest issues regarding Council members and potential, related state grant funding. Finally, Assistant Secretary Babb-Brott mentioned the upcoming Oceans Workshop tentatively scheduled for October 21, 2008, which will provide background information on ocean planning in general for the EEA planning team, the Oceans Advisory Commission and the SAC.

John Weber, Ocean Resources Manager, then provided an overview of the Oceans Act and the plan development process as currently in place. He explained that the Oceans Act establishes that a Plan needs to be finalized by December 31, 2009 – this means that the draft plan has to be made available to the public on July 1, 2009, for the six month public comment period.

John explained that, as currently envisioned, the Plan will have two main components:

- 1) a framework plan with a spatial component and defined management and implementation measures. He explained that in view of the short time schedule, the plan will likely have a broad approach at the outset. He emphasized advice from the SAC is will be important to help inform the development of the plan and its management/implementation measures;
- 2) a longer-term framework that formulates a strategy to integrate scientific, social, and economic information into the future.

John briefly described the ongoing collaboration between EEA and the Massachusetts Ocean Partnership, which has three main components:

- Analyze other ocean planning models that may be applicable to Massachusetts;
- Assist in the public outreach component including the Oceans Workshop scheduled in October; and
- Help identify any other data/GIS layers that can be incorporated into the Massachusetts Ocean Resource Information System (MORIS).

John then walked through a presentation that had been given at the first meeting of the Oceans Advisory Commission. The main points included:

- An overview of the Act including timelines;
- The proposed planning approach given the plan requirements and schedule laid out in the Act;
- The proposed stakeholder participation and public outreach approach.

The Council then briefly discussed the Terms of Reference handout, specifically regarding the four main areas of responsibility of the Council:

- 1) Review the working groups' data sources to identify other data that may be directly applicable and useful;
- 2) Assist in the development of an outline and structure for the baseline assessment, identify information sources and synthesize data to be included, and review drafts of the Ocean Plan baseline assessment/characterization;
- 3) Assist in the development of a recommended set of core indicators that would be established, measured and reported on to inform the progress of plan implementation, and the state of the ocean environment, including both natural and human dimensions;
- 4) Identify "big picture" questions to improve understanding of natural systems and/or human uses/influences and be directly applicable to future versions of the ocean plan; and help formulate a long term strategy for addressing these gaps.

During John's presentation, the Council discussed several aspects of the overview, raising the following observations and questions (note that responses to raised questions are provided in italics):

- The Act lays out 15 provisions for the plan to address. It will be beneficial to consider each one and see what it entails. *Answer: A main focus of the series of public meetings upcoming in the next several weeks is to listen to public feedback on these provisions and their refinement. By the next meeting of the Council, summary information of these public meetings will be available. which may bring us back to the question of whether the baseline is adequate to address these provisions.*
- Question: Is one of the purposes of the plan to try to delineate areas that can be used for certain activities? *Answer: In general, yes. A key question ultimately is "How*

confident are we of the data's completeness, accuracy, representativeness?" and this question will become particularly important as management measures are proposed and described. The working groups are working on locating data and identifying gaps, so it is premature at this point to identify how detailed the plan will be. Additionally, because of this question, the work of the Council in assisting in developing a strategic plan for acquiring and analyzing future data will be very important.

- It would be ideal if a list of the working group members (expanded) is made available to the members of the SAC.
- Is environmental variability being addressed by the working groups? *Answer: The working groups are identifying discreet areas of different levels of importance. This is not an easy task due to the amount of data needed in order to assess different conditions. It is also one of the tasks of the SAC to give advice on spatial and temporal variabilities.*
- Are the working groups bound by the plan area boundaries? This is an important concept to keep in mind when we consider issues of scale. *Answer: Working groups have been directed to consider the areas and activities outside of the plan areal.*
- It is possible to have a joint SAC/OAC meeting at some point? *Answer: Definitely possible in the future as the need arise. Note: the ocean planning workshop will include members of both the OAC and the Council.*

Regarding the Big Picture Questions

John then asked everyone to think about potential big picture questions that need to be asked and addressed in the ocean plan.

Indicators:

- To assist in the development of indicators, the EEA planning team has started looking at the development of an indicator program to help evaluate the success of the management plan. EEA is working with MOP and MOP's consultants on this issue. The results of this work will be discussed with the SAC as well.
- It is important to have data that is mapped, or will eventually be incorporated into a GIS format, as scales and spatial components become important in addressing certain issues.

- Indicators will help us build the information that regulators need to manage the planning area and make revisions to the plan in the future.

Plan area boundaries:

- John described briefly the historical facts leading up to the selection of the present boundaries for the plan area. For areas landward of the planning area, in particular, it was pointed out that there are other state regulations that cover those areas. In applying these existing regulations, certain activities outside the plan area may affect or be affected by, activities in the plan area. In such a case, existing standards could be used to resolve such an issue. For example, establishing water quality standards could indirectly control shore activities that may be a source of discharge that will affect the plan area. There may be a need to create some form of buffer zone.
- It would be useful to create a map of information on activities extracted from existing programs; for example, there are several programs along the eastern coast, from the Bay of Fundy to North Carolina, especially regarding estuarine programs, ocean observing system, and surface currents.
- It is important to analyze all data in order to assess how external activities may affect the plan area or be affected by the activities taking place within it. It will then be possible to address these issues as they come up, especially in the case of new activities. In view of reverse impacts, i.e. effects of activities in the plan area on the environment and activities outside of the plan area, it may not be wise to exclude certain data since we do not yet understand all the impacts that may ensue on ocean ecosystem resources, such as shellfish.
- Although we are setting spatial boundaries, it is important to keep in mind that ecosystems are dynamic, not static, and that they do not abide by the boundaries we set. Therefore you cannot draw a hard boundary in data collection.
- Management tools such as indicators, buffer zones, etc will be helpful in these regards as they will indicate the trend in the state of the environment.

Environmental Variability:

- The question of temporal variability has proved to be a challenging issue to the working groups, who have recognized that it is a very important issue that needs to be addressed in spite of the constrained time frame.
- It is challenging to look at the variabilities in the plan area as a whole, so eventually it may become simpler when addressing more local areas or smaller parts of the plan area.

Baseline Assessment Outline

Todd Callaghan introduced a draft of the outline for characterization of Massachusetts coastal waters as called for in the Oceans Act. The output envisaged will consist of one paragraph to one page addressing each topic to be drafted by approximately mid-November 2008 and then sent to the Council for their review and comment. A final draft is envisioned by early January, 2009.

The Council discussed the outline and touched on the following subjects (see the attached revised outline for an updated version that reflects this conversation):

- Place holders for certain topics that may need to be addressed;
- Outline organization--moving items to more relevant sections;
- Including a definition of ecosystem in the introduction;
- Use of metric vs. British units
- Splitting the plan area into subsections in terms of geography or ecology
- Including demographic data and at what scale;
- Including ACECs outside the plan area;
- Definition of “critical habitat”;
- Evaluating recreational/aesthetic/visual value;
- Include a section on coastal hazards;
- Include a section on climate change (sea level rise, temperature rise, flooding, ocean acidification)
- Wording/definitions in general.

Closing items

- As mentioned previously, EEA is working with MOP on an indicators evaluation. The issue of how to address climate change in the ocean plan is also being discussed, and will likely be on the agenda for a future Council meeting.
- The next Council meeting is scheduled tentatively for the end of November/beginning of December. Details will be forthcoming.
- John will provide additional information regarding Council process under the Open Meeting Law.
- The Oceans Workshop is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, October 21, 2008. Since the date is not yet definite, several members asked whether it would be possible to have it on Monday, October 20, due to lighter work schedules. Workshop details will be communicated to everyone as soon as possible.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4.20 PM.

